United Nations E/ICEF/2001/P/L.26

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
15 November 2000

Original: English

For information

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
First regular session 2001
22-26 and 29 January 2001
Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

Country note**

Guatemala

Summary

The Executive Director presents the country note for Guatemala for a programme of cooperation for the period 2002-2006.

The situation of women and children

1. The Peace Accords signed in December 1996 ended 35 years of civil war. They provide a comprehensive framework for the reform of Guatemalan society in order to ensure a sustainable peace. Children and adolescents are a strategic group in reaching this goal: 56 per cent of the 11 million inhabitants are under 18, and more than 75 per cent live in poverty. Guatemala is a multi-ethnic society, where 22 ethnic groups, 42 per cent of them Maya, inhabit a territory of 108,888 square kilometres.

2. Children and adolescents were profoundly affected by the violence of the armed conflict. The Historical Clarification (Truth Commission) Report documented the disappearance and murder of 200,000 people, including 40,000 children. A large number of children were orphaned or abandoned, in particular among the Mayas, and saw their families destroyed, along with the possibility of living a normal childhood within their culture. Throughout the armed conflict, members of civil

* E/ICEF/2001/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session of 2001.

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society were persecuted, including youth leaders, which further destroyed the social fabric and deprived Guatemala of the next generation of leaders for social change.

3. Children, adolescents and women still suffer from the legacy of war. The Common Country Assessment (CCA) defined exclusion and inequity as Guatemala's main problems and identified as root causes a weak democratic state of law, cultural discrimination against women and indigenous people, and an inequitable distribution of economic resources.

4. The socio-economic roots of the conflict were widespread poverty and extreme income disparities, problems which have yet to be addressed. Guatemala is a relatively rich country, with a per capita gross national product (GNP) of $1,660 (1999), yet the wealthiest 10 per cent of the population receive 46.6 per cent of GNP, while the poorest 10 per cent receive only 0.6 per cent. Land distribution shows similar inequality, and there has been inadequate coverage and poor quality of basic services. Nonetheless, the Government has moved to comply with Peace Accord commitments to increase social sector expenditures, which rose from 2.3 per cent of GNP in 1994 to almost 5 per cent in 1998. These expenditures represent about 34.8 per cent of the current budget, but institutional capacity to deliver services remains weak.

5. Social investments since 1990 have brought some results. The under-five mortality rate (U5MR) was reduced from 102 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 59 per 1,000 in 1999; vitamin A deficiency is under control; and an educational reform process has been launched. However, the heritage of poverty, violence and poor services has hindered the fulfilment of children's rights to survival and development. Guatemala has among the region's worst social indicators. HIV/AIDS has yet to be recognized as a serious threat by the society, and cases are greatly underreported. About one third of Guatemalan children are malnourished. As many as 16 per cent of school-age boys and 21 per cent of school-age girls never enrol; 22 per cent of those who do enter primary school drop out before grade three; and less than 10 per cent of indigenous children have access to bilingual education. The proportion of children benefiting from early stimulation and education is so small that no statistics exist. Child labour is widespread; more than 400,000 girls age 7 to 14 do not go to school because they have to work at home. The maternal mortality rate (MMR) is among the highest in Latin America (190 per 100,000 live births); and in provinces with a mainly indigenous population, the infant mortality rate and MMR are far higher than national averages.

6. Not only are indigenous children, women and girls victims of discrimination, they are also the most affected by hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and floods, in a country that, like the rest of Central America, has the world's highest risk of natural disasters.

7. The physical and mental integrity and dignity of children are threatened by corporal punishment, neglect, sexual abuse and domestic and street violence. Firearms and knives are the main causes of adolescent deaths. Psychosocial problems due to direct or indirect exposure to wartime and current violence affect many. This violence and stress, as well as unrelenting poverty, male emigration and increased rural-to-urban migration, also contribute to increased family disintegration.

8. Laws and regulations covering children and adolescents are incompatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified in 1990, and with other relevant conventions and protocols. In fact, the judicial system is too weak to ensure punishment for crimes against children. The possibilities for children and adolescents to exercise their rights, express an opinion, participate in society, become informed, and organized are very limited: for example, only 27 per cent of children 9 to 18 consider themselves well informed about HIV/AIDS; half of them do not know the meaning of child rights and democracy.

Lessons learned from past cooperation

9. The 1997-2001 country programme was formulated shortly before the Peace Accords were signed. It did not fully capture their spirit, nor adequately relate children's rights to the process of post-war transition. Despite this, it did realize significant achievements. The key effort was development of a new Code for Children and Youth, consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although resistance from small but powerful interest groups prevented this groundbreaking law from coming into force, children's rights have become a critical part of the political and public agenda, and have gained the support of the principal religious groups.

10. A 1999 mid-term review produced five lessons: (a) the country programme must be firmly aligned with the Peace Process to ensure sustainable rights protection; (b) Guatemala needs a broad effort to provide education and training on rights and democracy in order to assist in building a culture of respect for human rights; (c) more bridges must be built between the Government and civil society to reach consensus on public policies for children and women; (d) pilot projects for service delivery at the municipal level should be supported only if they serve as the basis of national policy formulation; and (e) civil society organizations must be empowered so they can negotiate, defend and monitor public policies that assure the rights of children and women.

Proposed country programme strategy

11. The UNICEF country programme for 2002-2006 contributes to the process of reconciliation, strengthening of democracy, and development of a sustainable peace in a post-conflict country, through the fulfilment of children's and women's rights. The programme supports a long-term vision whose two main axes are: the creation of a culture of respect for human rights; and the practical implementation of those rights so that all Guatemalan families satisfy their basic needs, live in dignity and are protected from rights violations. The programme will support the Government and society to implement the Peace Accords, the recommendations of the Truth Commission, the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights on the Child, and the obligations Guatemala has accepted in various international conventions.

12. Four country programme objectives will be pursued to tackle the root causes of exclusion and inequity: (a) development of public policies consistent with the rights of children and women; (b) an increase in coverage of state and non-state services to fulfil economic and social rights, and protect civil and political rights, especially of the most disadvantaged groups; (c) empowerment of civil society to build networks

and capacity to defend rights; and (d) development of a model of integrated municipal interventions in departments where social indicators are among the country's worst.

13. Strategies to reach these objectives address the demand by society for adequate basic services, a culture respecting rights, and the capacity of the State and its partners to respond to these demands. The major strategies are: (a) promoting knowledge and respect for the rights of children and women, targeting, in particular, teachers, women, children and adolescents; (b) fostering policy dialogue and action through alliance-building among government, civil society, international organizations and agencies; (c) advocacy for the reform and implementation of rights-based legislation; (d) strengthening the technical capacity, managerial abilities and social mobilization skills of state bodies, civil society organizations and community groups; (e) monitoring rights fulfilment and rights issues of women and children; and (f) evaluating and disseminating pilot experiences in building child-friendly municipalities. Integrated into all efforts, as cross-cutting themes, will be the rights of indigenous people, gender and disaster preparedness.

14. The new country programme is the result of extensive consultations with the Government, donors, United Nations agencies and some 80 civil society organizations (NGOs, churches, the private sector, universities and youth organizations). This coalition is the basis for Guatemala's active participation in the New Global Agenda for Children. The country programme responds to the problems identified in the Common Country Assessment and is fully integrated into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

15. UNICEF assistance to social development and to the creation of a culture of human rights in Guatemala will take the form of three programmes. The *social policy and community development programme* will support development of public policies consistent with the Peace Accords and based on state and civil society consensus to improve income distribution and guarantee the fulfilment of social and economic rights. Other key objectives will be promotion of a model for providing drinking water supply and sanitation services in rural communities, health sector reform, nutrition, mental health services, and HIV/AIDS prevention and management activities. The programme contains three projects: social policy; health and nutrition; and water supply and sanitation.

16. The *state of law and citizen participation programme* will strengthen all processes that enhance the capacity of civil society to understand, implement and defend the rights of children and women within a context of tolerance and reconciliation. It will support a legal system consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international treaties. Particular emphasis will be placed on the formation of, and leadership training for, women's groups and adolescent and youth associations. The programme consists of two projects: legal reform, judicial reform and protection; and citizen participation.

17. The *education and communication programme* recognizes the important instruments needed to build a society which respects human rights and is democratic, peaceful and multi-ethnic. This programme will support educational reform and non-formal education, with a particular focus on early childhood education, primary bilingual education, intra-family relations and education for adolescents in historical memory, peace and democracy. Networks of social communicators at all levels will be supported around such issues as children's

rights, women's rights, multi-culturality, child abuse and neglect, child labour and the right to education. The programme includes two projects: education and communication.

18. Cross-sectoral costs will provide technical assistance across the integrated programme, as well as operational support crucial to programme delivery.

Estimated programme budget

Estimated programme cooperation, 2002-2006*

(In thousands of United States dollars)

	Regular resources	Other resources	Total
Social policy and community development	1 738	8 622	10 360
State of law and citizen participation	678	7 087	7 765
Education and communication	857	6 908	7 765
Cross-sectoral costs	1 366	3 133	4 499
Total	**4 639**	**25 750**	**30 389**

* These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.